



State of Arizona
Department of Education

Tom Horne
Superintendent of
Public Instruction

February 12, 2003

School District Superintendents/Charter Holder Administrators
School Principals/Directors
Testing Coordinators

Dear School Official:

The rising pressures on schools to increase the performance of students and to produce higher scores on state-wide tests has resulted in headline stories of unethical test preparation practices in several states and has prompted the Arizona Department of Education to develop policy recommendations for the Arizona State Board of Education.

On January 27, 2003, the State Board of Education approved “TEST PREPARATION AND ADMINISTRATION PRACTICES: Arizona’s Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS)” and “TEST PREPARATION AND ADMINISTRATION PRACTICES: Stanford Achievement Test.” These documents list proper and improper test preparation and test administration practices for state mandated norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests.

Enclosed, please find a copy of the “TEST PREPARATION AND ADMINISTRATION PRACTICES” documents and a sample letter that we recommend be used to distribute the policies to teachers. We are concerned that the implementation of the test preparation and administration policies without proper notification to teachers would be unfair.

Therefore, since it is difficult for us to communicate with each teacher, we ask that you distribute the policies to teachers in the best manner possible.

Questions regarding the interpretation or implementation of the policies may be referred to Dr. Paul Young at 602-542-5450 or pyoung@ade.az.gov.

Sincerely,

Patricia Loughrin, Ed.D.
Associate Superintendent
Research, Standards and Accountability

Enclosures

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SAMPLE NOTIFICATION TO STAFF MEMBERS

TO: *faculty members*

FROM: *administrator*

SUBJECT: Proper and Improper Test Preparation and Administrative Practices

DATE: *current date*

On January 27, 2003, the Arizona State Board of Education approved “TEST PREPARATION AND ADMINISTRATION PRACTICES: Arizona’s Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS)” and “TEST PREPARATION AND ADMINISTRATION PRACTICES: Stanford Achievement Test.” These documents provide direction from the Arizona Department of Education and the Arizona State Board of Education regarding proper and improper activities that could be employed to prepare students prior to the administration of the state tests.

Officials at the Arizona Department of Education have strongly recommended that I notify you that these policies are in effect to avoid your innocent participation in any improper activities. Copies of the policies are available in my office and at the Arizona Department of Education’s web site at <http://www.ade.state.az.us/standards/aims/Administering/TestPracticesWeb.pdf>.

Questions regarding the implementation and interpretation of these policies should be directed to Dr. Paul Young at the Arizona Department of Education. You may contact Dr. Young at 602-542-5031 or pyoung@ade.az.gov.

Thank you.

TEST PREPARATION AND ADMINISTRATION PRACTICES ARIZONA'S INSTRUMENT TO MEASURE STANDARDS (AIMS)

In general, the best preparation for AIMS is good instruction. This can be broadly defined as instruction in the content specified in the Arizona Academic Standards. The instructional program should ensure that students are able to demonstrate mastery of the content standards in multiple item formats – e.g., multiple choice, short answer, and essay.

PROPER TEST PREPARATION AND ADMINISTRATION ACTIVITIES

1. Viewing all directions for administration before the test is administered and following the directions for administering consistently and in detail throughout the testing procedure.
2. Conducting reviews or drills that use identically formatted items that cover skills and knowledge in a domain but do not focus solely on the specific items or objectives tested.
3. Sharing scoring rubrics and sample papers with students to help them evaluate their own writing.
4. Teaching to the Arizona Academic Standards, i.e., aligning both the curricula and instruction with the Standards.
5. Training students to develop skills and strategies, such as marking answer sheets or budgeting time, to increase their proficiency at taking a variety of tests rather than to prepare them for a specific test.
6. Discussing the importance, purpose, and intended use of the test with students.
7. Checking answer sheets to make sure that each has been properly completed, that demographics are properly completed, and that erasures are clean.
8. Translating or paraphrasing directions. (Refer to “Special Education Guidelines,” “Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, AIMS and Stanford 9,” and “Guidelines for the Administration of AIMS and the Stanford 9 to English Learners.”)
9. All directions for administration should be viewed before hand and followed consistently and in detail throughout the testing procedure.

IMPROPER TEST PREPARATION AND ADMINISTRATION ACTIVITIES

1. Conducting reviews or drills that use actual test items.
2. Previewing any secure forms of the test for the purpose of teaching the knowledge or skill.
3. Leaving materials in view of the students that would help them to get a correct answer. Remove any materials from students' desks or classroom walls that students could see to assist them in answering a specific test item.
4. Limiting instruction exclusively to test items rather than defining instruction by the content standards measured.
5. Using practice tests and sample test items prepared by commercial enterprises solely for the purpose of raising the scores with minimal focus on teaching the knowledge and skills the test is designed to measure.
6. Translating or paraphrasing words on test items. (Refer to “Special Education Guidelines,” “Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, AIMS and Stanford 9,” and “Guidelines for the Administration of AIMS and the Stanford 9 to English Learners.”)
7. Disclosing test items to students prior to testing.
8. Changing a student's answer, or coaching a student on an item, or prompting a student to change an answer.
9. Any practice that is designed to have the same effect as 1-8.

An Ethics Litmus Test*

1. Does the test preparation practice inflate student scores beyond the scores that actually reflect the knowledge of the domain which the test is designed to sample? In other words, would you use the test preparation materials because they support your instructional materials rather than just because the items might be virtually identical to state mandated test items?

Yes

No

* The Ethics Litmus Test can be applied to practices that are not specifically addressed in the preceding list. Test preparation practices that generate “Yes” responses should be discontinued.

TEST PREPARATION AND ADMINISTRATION PRACTICES

STANFORD ACHIEVEMENT TEST

In general, the best preparation for the Stanford 9 is good instruction. This can be broadly defined as instruction in the content specified in the Arizona Academic Standards. The instructional program should ensure that students are able to demonstrate mastery of the content standards in multiple item formats – e.g., multiple choice, short answer, and essay.

PROPER TEST PREPARATION AND ADMINISTRATION ACTIVITIES

1. Viewing all directions for administration before the test is administered and following the directions for administering consistently and in detail throughout the testing procedure.
2. Training students to develop skills and strategies, such as marking answer sheets or budgeting time, to increase their proficiency at taking a variety of tests rather than to prepare them for a specific test.
3. Checking answer sheets to make sure that each has been properly completed, that demographics are properly completed, and that erasures are clean.

IMPROPER TEST PREPARATION AND ADMINISTRATION ACTIVITIES

1. Using parallel editions of the NRT series being used in the statewide testing program, and/or using copies of the test from previous years for practice.
2. Using practice tests and sample test items prepared by commercial enterprises solely for the purpose of raising the scores with minimal focus on teaching the knowledge and skills the test is designed to measure.
3. Previewing any secure forms of the test for the purpose of teaching the knowledge or skill.
4. Leaving materials in view of the students that would help them to get a correct answer (multiplication tables, homophones, synonyms).
5. Limiting instruction exclusively to test items rather than defining instruction by the content standards measured.
6. Disclosing test items to students prior to testing.
7. Changing a student's answer, coaching a student on an item, or prompting a student to change an answer.
8. Any other practice that is designed to have the same effect as 1-7.

An Ethics Litmus Test*

1. Does the test preparation practice inflate student scores beyond the scores that actually reflect the knowledge of the domain which the test is designed to sample? In other words, would you use the test preparation materials because they support your instructional materials rather than just because the items might be virtually identical to state mandated test items?

Yes

No

* The Ethics Litmus Test can be applied to practices that are not specifically addressed in the preceding list. Test preparation practices that generate “Yes” responses should be discontinued.